

# Building Character – Fun Performance Games

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## **Region 10 Let It Fly!!! –September 2014**

### **Objectives:**

- Give performers tools/training in concentration, imagination, and energy
- Teach performers how to move meaningfully on stage, using the entire body to strengthen their onstage performance
- Teach that performing is fun!
- Free up the sound by freeing up the body
- Develop heart in performances for more genuine delivery

**Focus Games** – to help a performer’s concentration, imagination, and energy on stage. Performers that are focused are riveting to watch. They have what is called “presence” onstage.

Here come the games.....

### **Diamonds!!!!**

The purpose of this game is to teach performers to be able to follow on stage, broaden focus to physicality, work unit movement, encourage individual creativity and leadership, and expand individual physical vocabulary. Like choreography? Get new ideas with this game!

You will need plenty of floor space, music to play through a loud speaker, and music selections that are both rhythmic and legato/ballet-like. Start with a 4-person diamond, 1 person in front, 2 people in row 2, and 1 person in row 3, all facing the same direction.

Get all singers on the floor in diamonds of 4 people (if you have odd numbers, 1 or 2 triangles of 3 each will do). All singers face the same wall.

The person in the front of each diamond is the starting leader. Play the music, and the diamond singers all follow the movement of the leader in their group. The goal is to move WITH the leader and not after her. As the leader, you can move any part of your body, including your feet, but you will not travel to any other spot. As the leader, make sure your movements are smooth, rhythmic, and big enough to follow easily.

After a few beats, the person in charge will call “turn.” At that direction, everyone in the diamond turns to the right, and they have a new diamond leader! They then follow that leader’s movements, until they turn again and again to have new leaders. Keep the music going throughout.

The next level of this game is to allow the group to decide when they will switch to a new leader, so it’s up to the leader to make it clear with her movements that she is passing to the next leader. This will cause the diamond group singers to focus more as they are looking for indications that the move may go into a turn, a new leadership, etc.

The next level of this game would be for the leader to decide to move the next leadership to her left instead, or to the center of the diamond, all determined by her movements.

Another level of this game would be for the leader to travel as she moves, and take the entire diamond with her! The leader then has to negotiate space for the entire group and pay attention to the groups around them.

Game Observations:

Are you more comfortable leading or following?

Who in your group is the easiest to follow, and why?

What are you doing in order to match the current leaders?

How does this apply to what we do on stage as singers?

## Prince of Paris

The purpose of this game is that the dialogue and rules are used to raise the player's energy and focus, and individual skills of projection and movement are addressed. The character is drilled, military, and precise.

Start with 8 players, and you can eventually add more. Play this in rounds, and keep having existing players select someone (quickly) to replace them. Have the players all line up facing the same direction. Number them sequentially, from Stage Left to Stage Right, starting with 1.

Tell the players to start at the front of the line, and one by one, step out, salute, and call out their number.... "One, sir!!!" and down the line.

This game is like a play, with lines:

Leader: "The Prince of Paris has lost his hat, and number \_\_\_\_ knows where it's at."

Number called: Steps out, salutes, "Who sir, me sir?"

Leader: "Yes sir, you sir."

Number called: "No sir, not I sir."

Leader: "Then who, sir?"

Number called: "Number \_\_\_\_, sir"

The new number steps out and says "Who sir, me sir?"

And the game continues from there....

For success, you can coach all the volunteer players through the response dialogue several times before they play the game.

The game goes like this: If you don't step forward, forget to salute, forget to say your own number, say a number that doesn't exist in the game, stutter, aren't projecting, forget your lines, forget to say "sir," are too slow, you are out. If you are out, you will move to the end of the line, and everyone will move up and get new numbers. If the leader says "Sound off," you will do what you did at the beginning, salute, and call out your number, which should help you to keep up with which number you are.

Describe the kind of energy you had on stage for this game. How quickly could you gather that energy? Focus on delivery of lines and energy?

**Stage Orientation and Movement** – Moving on stage is different than moving as we do every day. From an audience's perspective, we look pretty small on stage, so regular physical movement may not show up as real movements on stage. The audience is watching the whole stage (unless we show them where to look with accents, lighting, etc.), so we must learn how to move with meaning, and how to use the entire body on stage. Through well-planned and executed movement and awareness of stage space, we can focus the audience's eye to where we want them to look.

## **Lethargians**

Movement on stage is different from our every day movement. Movement on stage must be more extended and fluid, or else it will look frantic and jerky. This game will help create movements that are larger, more flowing, have more energy, and are more precise.

You can start this game with 2 people as demonstrators, or put a bunch of singers up on the risers, covering the risers, but not too packed.

This game is played in silence, with the volume all the way down. There are 3 different tiers to this exercise, played one after the other.

**First tier:** Leader calls for "action," and players start by greeting 3 audience members in the invisible audience. You may wave at them, blow them a kiss, give them a thumbs up, a high five, point to them, whatever you want, as long as it's silent and in slow mo-o-o-o-t-t-i-i-o-o-o-o-n.

**Tier Two:** Players will greet 3 people on stage with them. You may shake hands, hug, pat on the back, high five, or whatever, ALL IN LETHARGIAN.

Now you have greeted people off stage and on stage. Now...

When given the instruction, move to tier three...

**Tier Three:** Time to hurt each other, in a silent stage sort of way, In a nice way...no weapons..this is all hand-to-hand..

You might punch them in the stomach, strangle them, kick them, pull their hair, punch them in the face, slap them, etc. And if you are attacked like that, you must take the attack, react to it, and fall. And all of this is done in slow motion. So you won't really hurt anyone, because you will hardly touch anyone. The players should work to use various levels as they pretend fight.

Before the game starts, show how you would you greet an audience member, a good friend, at a regular speed, and how that would look in slow motion, as a demonstration.

In the game, when you are attacked, you must fall unconscious, in slow motion. Control your fall all the way down. If you have physical issues and are worried about falling, be sure to collapse over by the risers or a piece of furniture. Once you have fallen, you must play unconscious, and stay absolutely still. When there is only one person left, you can either determine that they are the victor, or let someone near them wake up and do them in so all players are down at the end.

What's different about moving in slow motion? What does this have to do with what we do on stage?

## **Always/Only**

Performers need to be aware of the movement around them on stage. Audiences' attention can be directed by controlling the movement of performers on stage. Always/Only helps the players to become aware of their movements and the movements of others. It can also be used as a technique for creating movement patterns on stage.

Try the game first with only a few singers, then larger numbers can play, as much as the space and their skills allow.

There are only 2 rules to this game. The first is that there must always be someone moving on stage. The second is that there can only be one person moving on stage. When the game begins, one person will move, and when she ends her move, she will freeze and someone else will move, finish moving, and freeze, and so on. Remember to keep still until you move, and when you do move, make it look interesting. And make sure you finish your move. If you are shifting your weight or twitching, you are still moving, and not finished with your interesting move.

Were you aware of the other players on stage? What does this game have to do with what we do on stage?

Enjoy playing these games and others to enhance your onstage performance!